

REMARKS:

- 1) The claims have been amended as follows:

Independent claim 21 has been amended to incorporate the subject matter of prior dependent claims 22 and 24.

Claim 33 has been amended into independent form by incorporating the subject matter of its prior parent claim 21.

Claim 41 has been amended into independent form by incorporating the subject matter of its prior parent claim 21.

Independent claim 42 has been amended to incorporate the subject matter of prior dependent claim 45.

Claims 22, 23, 24, 27 and 45 have been canceled.

Remaining dependent claims and their dependencies have been amended wherever necessary in view of the cancellation of some claims and for proper conformance with amended parent claims.

These amendments, which merely involve claim combinations, do not introduce any new matter.

Entry and consideration of the claim amendments are respectfully requested.

- 2) Referring to the middle of page 2 of the Office Action, the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112 second paragraph has been obviated by the cancellation of claim 27.
- 3) Referring to page 7 of the Office Action, the indication of allowability of independent claims 26 and 40 is appreciated. Claims 26 and 40 have been maintained without amendment, and should thus still stand allowed.

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- 4) Further referring to page 7 of the Office Action, the indication of allowable subject matter in prior claims 24, 31, 33 to 36, 38, 41 and 44 to 48 is appreciated. The claims have been amended to incorporate allowable subject matter into all remaining independent claims, as follows.

Independent claim 21 now includes the allowable subject matter of claim 24 and intervening claim 22. Thus, claim 21 and its dependent claims 25, 28 to 32 and 37 to 39 should now be allowable.

Claim 33 is now in independent form and includes the allowable subject matter of prior claims 21 and 33. Thus, claim 33 and its dependent claims 34 to 36 should now be allowable.

Claim 41 is now in independent form and includes the allowable subject matter of prior claims 21 and 41. Thus, claim 41 should now be allowable.

Independent claim 42 now includes the allowable subject matter of prior claim 45. Thus, claim 42 and its dependent claims 43, 44 and 46 to 48 should now be allowable.

As mentioned above, allowable independent claims 26 and 40 have been maintained without amendment and should still stand allowed.


- 5) Referring to pages 2 to 7 of the Office Action, the prior art rejections of claims 21 to 23, 25, 28 to 30, 32, 37, 39, 42 and 43 have been obviated by the present amendment. As mentioned above, the rejected independent claims 21 and 42 have been amended to incorporate the allowable subject matter from prior

non-rejected claims. Thus, the rejections are not applicable against the amended claims. Withdrawal of the rejections is respectfully requested.

- 6) Favorable reconsideration and allowance of the application, including all present claims 21, 25, 26, 28 to 44 and 46 to 48 are respectfully requested.

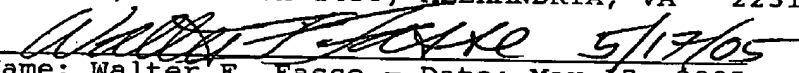
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CERTIFICATE OF FAX TRANSMISSION:

I hereby certify that this correspondence with all indicated enclosures is being transmitted by telefax to (703) 872-9306 on the date indicated below, and is addressed to: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS, P.O. BOX 1450, ALEXANDRIA, VA 22313-1450.


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